

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 5, 2022

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor-elect, Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam and Governor-elect Youngkin,

I write you both after the extreme weather events of this week to express my grave concerns over the immense and egregious delays along Interstate 95, between Exits 152 and 104. The timing of this storm and its impact requires that your Administrations – both outgoing and incoming – work together to ensure there is a clear understanding of what events and decisions led to or created the circumstances whereby a major transportation artery along the East Coast of the United States was at a standstill for more than 24 hours.

Before addressing the challenges of this week, I would like to express my appreciation for the hard work of the men and women of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Virginia State Police, local police, sheriffs' deputies and first responders, and all those who helped our fellow Virginians stranded along I-95, nearby roadways, and across our communities where road blockages and power outages continue to cause crisis scenarios.

The traffic stoppages along Interstate 95 left thousands of drivers stranded on the road, in their cars, in freezing weather for more than 24 hours without access to food, water, heat, restrooms, and in some cases cell service. I have heard harrowing stories from Seventh District constituents stranded in these conditions. Among those trapped included families with infants, Virginians on their way to parents' funerals, and commuters just trying to get to or home from work. During this ordeal, they reported receiving no guidance, information, or support for hours; as they attempted to ration gas, stay warm, and calm their scared children.

While we cannot prevent or change the weather, we can take active steps to learn from this week's worst-case scenario realized and ensure we know what caused, predicated and/or allowed this catastrophe on I-95 to occur — so that we can prevent it from happening again. To this end, I am requesting your Administrations coordinate to conduct a full-scale, multi-agency After Action Report detailing the events, decisions, factors, and challenges leading up to and following the storm, with a full accounting of what went wrong and what went right, and recommendations for process improvement. It is my hope that we can learn from the terrible events of this week and ensure that they never occur again.

On behalf of the constituents of Virginia's Seventh District, I thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,



Abigail D. Spanberger

Member of Congress